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The Facts of Anarchy
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The Facts of Anarchy

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WE HAVE OFTEN HEARD THE ABUSE that the ideal of anarchist communism is an unrealizable fancy. Everyone clings to the superstitious belief that autonomy cannot be achieved without the support of a central government. In particular, some socialists … sneer at the "dream" of anarchism. Yet I have found that it is not a dream, but something aspects of which have been realized in the autonomy of the villages inherited from our ancestors. In some remote districts where there is no so-called "culture," I have discovered a simple mutual aid … and a social life based on mutual agreement. It is completely different from "administration" under central government, being a mutual aid organization generated by necessity and continued in parallel with the official administration since before the time when there was an "administrative organ."

Now I want to depict the facts that I have seen personally at my native village …

There are sixty to seventy houses divided into six small associations, and these six associations federate with each other as the occasion demands … There are no chains of command or officials. The spirit of the associations, inherited from their ancestors, is "to assist each other in times of trouble."

… [At village meetings] everyone frankly speaks his own thoughts .. .There is no fearful atmosphere to make one too timid to express his own opinion … In fact, there is no discrimination, whether he is a village master or a daily labourer. .. There is neither haughtiness nor humility …

How are decisions made? They do it together. Generally, if it is practical or based on clear facts, even more if everyone has offered his knowledge and opinions, the decision will be reached spontaneously …

When a sick person must take to his bed, the news will be reported to the association. The members will rush to the house. Some will get a doctor, others will report it to his relatives; they go on these errands or nurse him kindly …

In cases of childbirth, the women of the association come together. They take care of everything until the mother rises again. Everything else, whenever help is needed, the association will provide it without complaint. Of course there will be two or three families out of favour with the members. With respect to helping such families, although the members may speak ill of them or even complain, they will never refuse to help, for they distinguish between their work for the association and their personal antipathies.

Administrative tasks are shared by the members. If a particular task is long lasting, shifts are arranged so that there is no inconvenience. The responsibility of each member to the association is not coerced or unwilling. He performs his role … so as to follow his conscience … No command or supervision is needed …

After the satisfactory resolution of a particular task, an association formed for that purpose is dissolved. The unit of federation [in each village] is not the association, but each home …

The police seem useless to the association. Quarrels … are mainly settled by the association … A couple from a certain family stole something. The victim had proof and previous knowledge. The victimized family summoned the couple [before the association] and scolded them. Both the victims and the thieves agreed as a settlement of the matter to the announcement that the couple would be expelled from the assembly if they committed the crime again …

Expulsion is the last resort … When one receives this punishment, no one dares to associate with him … So they think of the seriousness of this punishment and do not impose it on someone unless his deed is intolerable. As far as I know, I have not heard of this great punishment being imposed on a family …

Egoistic urban life is intolerable to those accustomed to village life. Where there is no hope of success besides poverty, it is far more comfortable and warm to support each other under the protection of the association.